DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 362 901 CS 214 087

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TITLE Strengthening Adolescent Identity Formation through Development and Presentation of Family Literary Documents.
PUB DATE 93
NOTE 74p.; Ed.D. Practicum, Nova University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adolescents; *English Instruction; *Family Characteristics; *Family History; High Schools; High School Students; Instructional Effectiveness; Integrated Activities; Self Concept; Units of Study
IDENTIFIERS High School Sophomores; *Identity Formation

ABSTRACT

A practicum was designed to improve a high school sophomore curriculum in traditional English rhetoric and the study of literary classics by adding a component to strengthen adolescent identity formation. Students were encouraged to generate and present family literary documents including varieties of familial cultural artifacts. Portfolios, simulations and presentations constituted palpable measures of emergent awareness of commonalities among groups and within the class. Using lessons published by experienced teachers in professional journals, students drew maps of points of family interest; wrote autobiographies, self-reports, and journal essays; invented coats of arms; created histories and scenarios of important family events; compiled family trees; and wrote and published essays in defense or in celebration of larger group/familial memberships. Through literary materials, students discovered enlarged self-identity and a base of support. Twenty-one students received payment for publishing articles in a newspaper with a circulation of 100,000. An enlarged concept of the familial was used to mitigate the effects of possible family dysfunctionality as students came to associate ethnicity, multiculturalism and peer group memberships with literacy and a positive cultural imaging process. Students experienced community building through shared literacy projects. Significant experiences of positive bondings dramatically enhanced students' powers of reflection, self-acceptance, respect for diversity, and media self-expression. Cross-curriculum experiences included art, historiography, graphics, critical thinking, speech and drama, ethnography, rhetoric, computer technology, music and cooperative learning. (Four color charts of data, and nine brightly colored student-developed coats of arm are appended. Contains 25 references.) (Author/RS)

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ED 362 901

STRENGTHENING ADOLESCENT IDENTITY FORMATION THROUGH DEVELOPMENT AND PRESENTATION OF FAMILY LITERARY DOCUMENTS

by

Francis R. McLellan

Cluster 43

A Practicum II Report Presented to the Ed. D. Program in Child and Youth Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1993

CS 214087

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This practicum was submitted by Francis R. McLellan under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

Oct. 26, 1993
Date of Final Approval of Report

William W. Anderson, Ed.D., Adviser

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special acknowledgement can in no way compensate for the forbearance, patience and wisdom requisite to this adventure in becoming our very best selves. My mentor and friend, Dr. William W. Anderson, dispelled confusion and shed a constant light. My treasured wife, Jolinda Haney McLellan, gave critical thought and companionship to a lonely research process. Superintendent Geoffrey Fanning permitted and inspired the curriculum changes required. Dr. Mary Ellen Sapp of Nova University applied a motivating sensibility and exemplary research discipline. If this project helps even one more student's future, it is to these people that the writer directs applause.

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ABSTRACT

Strengthening Adolescent Identity Formation Through Development and Presentation of Family Literary Documents. McLellan, Francis R., 1993: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies.

Descriptors: Adolescents: Bonding: Cooperation: Cultural Artifacts: Cultural Literacy: Creative/Critical Thinking: Family Relationships: Identity Formation: Reflection: Secondary Education: Social Development: Writing Across the Curriculum

This practicum improved a high school sophomore curriculum in traditional English rhetoric and the study of literary classics by adding a component to strengthen adolescent identity formation. Students were encouraged to generate and present family literary documents including varieties of familial cultural artifacts. Written by an English teacher with 30 years of experience, the curriculum enhanced student reflective, interviewing, writing and presentation skills, while promoting student self confidence, by empowering student presenters as experts on their individual ethnic and peer group memberships. Portfolios, simulations and presentations constituted palpable measures of emergent awareness of commonalities among groups and within the class. Using lessons published by experienced teachers from professional journals, students drew maps of points of family interest, wrote autobiographies, self reports, journal essays, invented coats of arms, created histories and scenarios of important family events, compiled family trees, and wrote and published essays in defense or in celebration of larger group/familial memberships. Through literary materials, students discovered enlarged self identity and a base of support. Twenty-one students received payment for publishing articles in a newspaper with a circulation of 100,000. An enlarged concept of the familial was used to mitigate the effects of possible family dysfunctionality as students came to associate ethnicity, multi-culturalism and peer group memberships with literacy and a positive cultural imaging process. Students experienced community building through shared literacy projects. Significant experiences of positive bondings dramatically enhanced students' powers of reflection, self acceptance, respect for diversity, and media self-expression. Cross-curriculum experiences included art, historiography, graphics, critical thinking, speech and drama, ethnography, rhetoric, computer technology, music and cooperative learning.

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Francis R. McLellan (signature)

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Work Setting and Community

The primary work setting is an English classroom in a traditional brick building. Two English classes held during periods B and E on the school schedule, and numbering 29 and 26 students respectively will be engaged in the learning process.

Constructed in 1923, the building is the oldest of three distinct building structures linked by connecting corridors on twenty acres in a residential neighborhood located one mile from the center of this suburban town of 25,000 population. This senior comprehensive high school includes grades nine through twelve with 97 teachers and 1150 students. Departmentally divided, with rigid departmental autonomy, cross curriculum writing and interdepartmental cooperation has been minimal. There are fewer than 50 Southeast Asians and African American students, and only

one minority (African American) teacher. 95.6% of all students graduate, while 4.4% drop out. 15% attend community college after graduation, and 50% aspire to four year college. 74% of the class of 1989 took the SAT examinations.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

A recent regional accreditation report suggested that teachers show professional pride, loyalty to professional responsibilities, respect for the creativity of students and a consistent sense of purpose in planning work. With the recent retirement of the Superintendent of Schools, a new Superintendent already shows promise of adjusting the curriculum to meet the needs of students of the 21st century. A thirty year veteran in the teaching profession, the writer holds three degrees: a bachelor's degree with a major in English from a liberal arts college of a large university, a Master of Fine Arts degree from a professional school of another university, and a Master of Arts degree in philosophy from a liberal arts graduate program of a university. The writer has directed musical plays in a settlement house setting in the inner city, has integrated programs for thirteen teachers in a setting for young heroin addicts, has been an Instructor in English and/or education at

two state colleges and two private colleges, has lectured at the graduate level for master's candidates and to monastics training to be secondary school teachers, and has held fellowships at Boston University and Harvard at the graduate level. In 1985-86, the writer was one of thirty teachers who worked and resided together at Harvard University as NEH fellows at the Russian Research Center. With 24 years as an English department member in his present setting, the writer served four times as Director of a Summer School whose purpose was to remedy the failures of students who came largely from dysfunctional homes. In the last two years of the Summer School program, no students of the approximately 500 students attending failed or dropped out of the program. The writer's role in this practicum is to address the reality that dysfunctional family units generate dysfunctional high schools while the current pedagogy fails to provide for students to achieve their primary developmental task- strong personal identity. There have been no abortive or feckless attempts to deal with the problem through the curriculum. Budgetary constraints and other problems have hampered significant curriculum development for ten years. Extracurricular activities have aided students greatly in

coming to grips with the problem of deciding who they are. Musical groups, sports teams, SADD, Peer Leadership, debate clubs, chess, drama etc. have allowed for powerful bonding, and have often provided escape from dreary and abusive home situations. Special needs students have individual education programs (IEP's) with parental involvement and clearly stated bonding and identity formation goals. Nevertheless, this practicum will be the first known attempt to integrate identity formation goals with family bonding through the academic discipline of English rhetoric.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

There is an abundance of evidence to support the observation that family instability of the 1990's has led to family dysfunctionality and that family dysfunctionality generates high school dysfunctionality. It is timely, then, for current pedagogy to become proactive in addressing the challenges brought on by self-alienation and negative identity formation in adolescence. Basic concepts of gender roles, family, parental responsibility, and career choice fundamental to the formation of a strong self identity are patently subject to cultural as well as individual interpretation. Language is the medium through which cultural beliefs, presuppositions and values are communicated. It is appropriate for English rhetoric to become the tool by which the dysfunctionality problem can be articulated. Family literary documents are at

present not provided for in the English curriculum. This practicum will generate family literary documents through student presentations. Briefly stated, the problem is absence of an English curriculum approach wherein students present family literary documents. This practicum will eliminate that deficiency.

Problem Documentation

The evidence provided by popular literature, national surveys, self reports, teacher observations, the daily press and contemporary films attests to loss of cultural literacy. The practicum will seek to use measures of local student cultural sensibility in quantitative and qualitative conceptual mappings and surveys to test students' abilities to identify the number, locale, names, ethnic and racial connections, and geographical points of family interest that sum up their cultural heritage. Each student will write an autobiography at the beginning and another at the end of the unit. The mean number of relatives the 55 students can name is 53. These same students can identify an average of four different ethnic groups in their immediate family background. Only 17 out of 55 students have mentioned any specific ethnic points of origin in their autobiographies, and of the seventeen mentioned, only 2 were listed

with marked pride. Students have drawn a travel map prior to the outset of the process, using the school as the center of geographical focus. Each student has indicated how far North, South, East and West the student has traveled from this center point, and has placed an x at each known point of family interest. An average of four x marks were placed on each travel map. The prediction of the practicum is that the numbers of each indicator mentioned above will increase. Before and after surveys will appear in the body of the final report indicating mean numbers of relatives that can be named for each group. The first survey figures will be postested and checked against a second survey that will require each student to list all the relatives they can name. Journal essays will trace students' moments of increasing cultural self-awareness. Group work will enhance students' ability to share and use ideas of others in pursuing their heritage.

Causative Analysis

The causes of dysfunctional connection with cultural/family awareness are both simple and complex. It is simply true that most students have not traveled far in fact or imagination. Their geographical maps will reveal that the southernmost venture for

most students in this setting is Disney World, and the westernmost point is probably somewhere in Pennsylvania or Ohio. The homogeneity of the town and the dominant role of American values in submerging the importance of minority as opposed to melting pot culture is largely decisive in rendering students less aware of and less sensitive to values of their own minority and plural cultural memberships. Thirdly, general family disruption, as revealed in a survey of the 55 students can make family imaging painful and problematic.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Schlechty (1990) has shown convincingly that the outmoded goals of the schools- particularly the high schools include three cultural functions-Tribal, (assimiation of European culture), Factory, (sorting students), and Hospital (remedial). In pursuing these goals, the schools have focused upon the product of education as the "whole child," and have forgotten that their more essential mission is to generate quality work that students and the community will find of value. Values and beliefs are ever present in the way Americans look at schools due to the diversity and range of possibilities emanating from the vast cultural wealth of the nation.

With the dominant culture demanding the surrender of minority sensibilities, the literature is suggesting that it is time to invest in teachers and programs that provide for a child to be bonded with the older generation. We are, in fact, in a time of crisis. In a recent interview with expert on child criminology, Professor James Fox of Northeastern University, published in the Boston Globe, (November 12, 1992, pp. 43-45), a strong link was inferred between lack of family bonding and the presence of murderous intent and behavior on the part of young (13-16 year old) adolescents. Before Congress, on national television, and in print many other professionals are adding voices to the chorus of watchful caretakers of youth who discern in the collapse of the traditional family the problem of dysfunctional symptoms of lowered student self-esteem, divided family loyalties, and confused racial/ ethnic/ cultural identity. Clinical psychologists (Weiss,1975), ethnographers (Spradley, 1979), sociologists (Kim, 1981), regionalists (Chafin, 1986), employee assistant counselors (Larkey,1990), poets (Bruchac, 1986), child educators (Natov, 1986), international educational reformers (Kravetz, 1984), high school instructors (Harris, Schelhaas & Carroll, 1992), communication researchers (Jeffries, 1983), union

leaders (Shanker, 1991), and biographers (Pearlman & Henderson, 1990) have addressed the issue at many levels.

The literature shows that the causes of the problem include an assimilationist agenda in public school curricula that reflects the majority view. The majority view fails to meet the needs of already dysfunctional family units. Dysfunctional family units generate dysfunctional high schools while the pedagogy fails to provide for students to achieve their primary developmental task-- strong personal identity formation.

Pearlman and Henderson (1990) crossed multicultural borders to reveal the special needs of twenty-eight recognized American women writers of varied ethnicity, family sizes, lifestyle choices, age, religion, sexual preference, geography and race. These needs present a distinctive challenge to the English instructor who would nourish and cultivate profound qualities of speaking and listening required for such women to learn to acquire literary voices of their own. Naturally and often, the writers dwelt upon family issues- family bonds, family tragedies, privacy and safe personal space issues. These women came from families that lived in expectation of disaster, from grandmothers at whose deaths they dared not cry,

from fathers who left and mothers defined by their memories. Some came from homes that public officials felt free to invade. Tan, whose Chinese mother was forced into concubinage, reported her own cultural entrapment in her American schooling. School meant assimilation into the dominant culture, and assimilation meant that you had to give up your family minority culture.

Tan's reaction to her school's mirroring of the " melting pot" American political process was to tighten her bonding with her Chinese mother and to bring sharp focus to her Chinese culture-perhaps to the neglect of her other cultures. This practicum hopes to facilitate wider cultural awareness and prideful embrace of their minority culture as part of the students' pre-writing activity of acquiring a voice of one's own.

Finders (1992) shows how the discipline of ethnography can make educators look up from the attendance book to see the rich textures of community life that emerge from our students' participation in values, rules, rituals, colloquialisms, histrionics and traditions blended from the varied communities each student knows. Many surprises attend teacher focus on the expert knowledge young people bring to school, surprises that should make

professionals look carefully for possible false assumptions and for cogent implications for growth in student self-awareness.

Jankowski (1991) showed that incentives for joining youth gangs in four American cities included celebration of membership in family and community traditions and the exercise of a political role, (helping to get people to the polls), as well as material, physical and recreational incentives. Surprisingly, gang members and "social club" organizers saw themselves as benefactors of social workers and the general economy because youth delinquency provides social service jobs. This practicum will use ethnographic techniques to help students relate family stories and local lore in ways that will enhance family bonding and personal identity formation.

A third source of seminal literature for this practicum is the literature of high school English teacher-professionals, especially the works found in IdeasPlus, Book Ten (1992) given as an exclusive benefit to English teacher-subscribers to the National Council of Teachers of English. Professionally tested activities and materials will increase the likelihood of a more effective student response to the practicum project.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The goals of the practicum are to empower students as experts on their family cultures through presentations, performances and projects using family literary documents while advancing student writing, interviewing and presentation skills. In the context of enhancing student awareness, the practicum will offer extended opportunities to bond with family identity through critical and creative reading of and writing about family literary documents.

Expected Outcomes

Students will identify and interview family members. In the process, students will enlarge their concepts of what is family. Students will collect and study family literature. Students will use creative imagination in enlarging family literature. Students will share family literary documents with pride in an enlarged personal

and family identity.

Measurement of Outcomes

Students will list known family members at the beginning and end of the process. They will draw a travel map showing the school area as the geographic center and will list North, South, East and Western outermost points of their lifetime travel experiences. Students will indicate with an x each point of interest to their families on their travel map at the beginning and end of the practicum experience. Students will write a personal autobiography at the beginning and end of the practicum. In their autobiography they will list family members of any importance to them. Students will interview family members and draw up a genealogical chart. Students will write a "Who's Who" essay identifying all significant family members at the beginning and end of the practicum. Students will draw a color bar graph listing countries from which ancestors came and invent or copy family coats of arms. Students will list and interpret symbols appropriate for their families' participation in famous historical/social/cultural/religious events. They will list artifacts of special interest, family specialized skills and creative or inventive contributions family members may have participated in

shaping. Students will list languages their families have spoken. The measurement predictions are:

I. The mean length of student autobiographies will increase over the length of those written at the beginning of the practicum.

2. The mean number of family members named in the post autobiography will increase over those named at the beginning of the practicum.

3. Individual travel maps using x 's to show points of family interest will increase in the mean number points indicated over the maps prepared at the beginning of the practicum.

4. A portfolio of an increased quantity family literary documents will demonstrate that each student has greater material awareness of family interactions than at the outset.

5. The bar graph of family national points of origin will show a larger number of colors and locales than at the beginning of the practicum.

6. Lists of symbols appropriate in celebrating family history will lengthen with time.

7. Family crests and coats of arms will become more elaborate.

8. Some students will create personal photo albums as well as family albums to be added to small libraries of family literary artifacts.

9. Some students will generate family videos or collect videos and family films, tapes, diaries, letters, legal documents, proverbs, jokes and memoirs. These documents will also be added to literary libraries.

10. Family trees will be larger, and numbers of family interactions will increase. Awareness of holidays, foods, songs, dances, and international history should also increase. Recipes, musical sheets or scores, greeting cards, postcards and clippings from published documents will be saved in folders.

11. Journals will record the growth in awareness of these indicators of a strengthened bond with family members through literature. Student journals will be kept weekly to record expected and unexpected events.

Evaluation tools will include a bar graph showing the increase in the number of placements of the letter x on the enlarged points of family interest maps. A measure will be taken of the extended list of acknowledged family members and cultures represented in each

student's families. Longer and more detailed autobiographies, longer answers to survey questions regarding the variety of family interests and journal entries will attest to growth in family awareness. Small libraries of family literary artifacts with related photographs and documents such as letters, telegrams, diaries and deeds will be displayed. Graded performances and presentations, portfolios of materials and essays, and wider projections of where students might like to travel in the future due to family ties will all constitute evidence of family bonding and cultural pride.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGIES

Description and Evaluation of Solutions

The problem is that many dysfunctional family units generate dysfunctional high schools while the pedagogy fails to provide for all students to achieve their primary developmental task- strong personal identity formation. The literature suggests a variety of solutions for the problem of dysfunctionality in adolescence such as early intervention in infant bonding or pre-adolescence, school staffing involving people skilled in bonding with students, and dramatically increased spending of funds to enrich lives of adolescents. These solutions ignore the need to empower the student as expert bringing valued knowledge to the school setting. Nor do they address the need of the adolescent student for literacy and for cultivation of those skills that make for competence in written and oral self expression. The solution sought in this

practicum combines the study of traditional and contemporay classics with the presentation of family literary documents. The politically appropriate emphasis on multicultural values will enhance students' self identity, acceptance, and personal identity formation.

Description of Selected Solution

Justification for the solution selected begins with a progam to reduce identity alienation through cultural self acceptance. Contemporary literary classics such as Catcher in the Rye, Ordinary People and A Separate Peace show that substance in writing has much to do with the ability to hear one's own voice or voices. Family identification and personal memory provide the emotional cement for identity formation. The stories told through discussion of family literary documents will enlarge student perspectives. Looking up family members will be an adventure. Being included, bringing one's own knowledge to school and sharing it with others will involve students in self reflection in a non -threatening setting aimed at enlarging their perspectives.

Pre-practicum activities such as journal writing, classroom newspaper production, vocabulary improvement, cooperative

learning, improving interviewing skills by introducing each other to the class, skits, short plays, and musical performances have given a sense of solidarity, competence, and appreciation of the power of the dramatic imagination to both classes. One class, enthused by the magic of their own voices, chose to give a musical performance before the entire school. Two students have published essays that reflect pride in ethnic minority while defending the concept of individual freedom and personal responsibility. Both students received payment checks from The 21st Century, a newspaper with a circulation of 100,000. A minority student won a savings bond and recognition from the regional cable company for placing first in an essay contest open to all tenth grade high school students in the region. Her topic was "If I Were President."

Improved typing, word processing, and graphics skills through cooperative learning will enhance the students' memory poems, toy evaluation essays, neighborhood ethnography, and self esteem through affirmations exercises during the course of this practicum. Students will see more and say more, hear more and read more than ever before about their own background.

Report of Action Taken

The first four months of teaching for the academic year 1992-93 involved pre-practicum activity including preliminary surveys of student travel and family interests, practice in reflective writing, honing journal writing skills, and improving students' interviewing, newspaper and word processing skills. Students wrote about general family ties, considered family literature, and became more aware of family lore by sharing stories in class. The reader can replicate the practicum activities by reviewing IdeasPlus, Book Ten, (1992) a publication of the National Council of Teachers of English to find more detailed descriptions of some of the assigments and lessons described below.

During the first month of the practicum, the principal goal was to promote students' early childhood family awareness. Students wrote autobiographical journal essays, toy evaluations, studied family albums, recalled games, films, fairy tales, media figures, child caretakers, looked for drawings, made notes on family illnesses, and opted to write about the family doctor or dentist. Students listed known family members and drew travel maps as indicated earlier in this document under "Measurement of Outcomes."

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They were trained to test personal reactions to multicultural sharing experiences through reflective dialogue and interviews with other students they perceived as very different from themselves. Students listed foreign languages spoken at home, and wrote reports regarding locales where family members felt they had been influential.

During the second month, the class pursued an early childhood theme regarding each student's past as a family setting, and viewing the mind as a tape recorder, in accordance with suggestions from teachers who had published in the English Journal. The focus on grandparents led to lore, family favorite stories, descriptions of the homestead, discussions of family mobility, experiences of prejudice suffered by the family, collections of proverbs, early rites of passage, letter collections, school descriptions, and accounts of favored cartoons on film and elsewhere. The first week students discussed and wrote about family travel, adventure or lore such as ghost stories or family camping adventures. The second week, students brainstormed to describe the family homestead and its environs, support institutions, and key neighbors or others associated with each student's concept of their earliest home.

Optional alternative assignments included descriptions of schools or audio-tapes of family wisdom as treasured proverbs. The third week dealt with family mobility or rites of passage such as purchase of grown up clothing, first experiments with make-up, or first entrance into clubs, schools or organizations that had previously been taboo due to lack of age readiness. The fourth week students chose to discuss and write about cartoons, family experiences of coping with prejudice and interactions with members of the opposite gender before students were aware of some important implications of gender differences.

Duing the third month and fourth months, the practicum focus was on siblings, early adolescence, and the life plans of past and present family members. In essay writing, students gained focus on adventures with siblings, lyrics, holidays whose meanings were significantly changed by the arrival of adolescence, memories of weddings attended as adolescents, and changes in choices of mischief making. Family pride and rivalries were themes brought out sometimes by making family crests, by memories of family outings, rituals, and battles of wit. Students also wrote about and discussed the new importance of concerts and dances.

The first week of the third month, students wrote character sketches describing the more cherished or colorful members of their peer group or siblings. Students listed songs and wrote out lyrics that held special significance for them as family or group members. The assignment was to write out lines of songs or whole songs students thought held important meaning that their family or peer group members would remember in the future. The second week students wrote about rivalries as acted out through mischief at dances, in school or at outings. Battles of wit counted as rivalries and were fair game for student compositions. During the third week, students researched or invented family crests and wrote about special family holidays, weddings or forced family rituals. During the fourth week, students wrote memory poems based on a flow of images associated with lyrics, and tied the images to memories of persons dear to them.

During the first week of the fourth month, students listed affirmations or thoughts of things close to their hearts that encouraged them when they felt turbulence in their lives. Students used these affirmations in writing about their lives as a journey wherein students chose both their destination and the metaphorical

roads they would travel. The second week, students wrote a critical review of a film, explaining how important peer and family support was to the affluent but dysfunctional protagonist, Conrad, in Ordinary People. The third week, students viewed the mind as a tape recorder, and wrote in stream of consciousness style using dots and dashes without concern for punctuation and without undue fuss in choosing words. The fourth week, students wrote about family pets, viewing the impact of the pet on family, peers and neighbors. The final week, students listed gifts they remembered as having the most meaning for them. They recalled the context and the occasion on which the gift was given.

The fifth and sixth months placed special focus on parents, courting, family tree construction, family reunions, family public image interest, students' personal hopes for and visons of the future. Writing assignments included interviews with parents or other family members regarding courting traditions, (week one). Weeks two and three, each student was assigned to write a newspaper entirely devoted to his/her individual family. News that defined family successes, relationships, celebrations, achievements, memoirs, and crises were included. Real or imagined parental love

letters and engagement to marriage scenarios were also included in family newspapers or newsletters. Week four involved shared hopes of parents or students that generated significant familial interactions.

The first week of the sixth month yielded the final version of the family tree. Students brought these family trees to family reunions with happy results and feelings of bonding. The second week students wrote papers that discussed family reunions, with an emphasis on special foods for the occasion. For the third week, students wrote "Back to the Future" papers projecting their expectations.

During the seventh month, students wrote papers regarding travel plans to visit sites replete with family history. They wrote papers describing what they had learned and what they intended to study further about specific relatives from the most distant places. Students compiled a second travel map showing points of family interest, and projected a map for future family travel and interaction.

For the eighth month, students communicated with each other and with relatives through travel and telephone. They established

links with family members and bonds with peers as they expanded family ties and personal journals. At a reunion/reception in the classroom where the project had begun, they shared what they had learned, their revised travel maps, and revised coats of arms in an atmosphere brimming with new confidence and maturity.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The problem stated in Chapter II was to create a curriculum strategy within the framework of the traditional Grade 10 rhetoric/literary classics study course for college-bound students that would make a place for strong personal identity formation through students bonding with familial, nurturing people. A major device within this strategy included having students behave as experts in the classroom by presenting literary documents from the students' own families. This first goal of the practicum was to empower students as sharing learners through presentations, performances and projects to enhance student writing, interviewing and presentation skills. A second goal was to enlarge the concepts of family and ethnicity to include familial bonds beyond the nuclear family and to underscore the value of membership in positive

sociological groups (e.g. cheerleaders or basketball team). The latter device enabled students from fragmented families to participate on equal footing with students from traditional nuclear families. At the same time, students were encouraged to perceive ethnicity and peer group memberships as opportunities for self-enrichment. The syllabus in Chapter IV circumscribed the particular extended opportunities for students' bonding.

Chapter III listed expected outcomes and promised plausible measurement of indicators of student growth in awareness of the constructs listed. Fifty-five students of the two classes reported the following itemized results.

1. Who's who essay at beginning and end of practicum process. Students were to list known family members. The prediction of the practicum was that the mean number of family members would increase. In a surprisingly large number of 2448 family members listed, the variance was only 20 additional members. The number did not affect the mean number of members reported- 53 members per family.

2. Travel maps. At beginning and end of the practicum process, students made travel maps using x's to show points of

family interest. The prediction was that the mean number of x points would increase. The mean number of x points did increase from 4.0 to 7.11, suggesting that the total group awareness of family points of interest came reasonably close to doubling. The lowest number was four, the mode was five, and the median was six. Nine students reported x points of interest in double figures.

3. Student autobiographies. The prediction was that student autobiographies would increase in length by the end of the process. Having written the first autobiography, students were content to add journal essays, but reluctant to repeat or rewrite autobiographies. Journal essays submitted weekly grew longer toward the end of the academic year. All journal essays were longer than one page, and 38 journal essays were longer than two pages for the last two weeks of the term. No journal exceeded four pages per week for the entire year.

4. Genealogical charts. Students drew genealogical charts and color bar graphs of ancestors' countries of origin. A pie chart and three graphs illustrating the claimed ethnicity of the 55 students may be seen in the Appendix of this report.

5. Invent or copy a coat of arms. All students enthusiastically

participated in this project, some several times. As predicted, the crests and coats of arms grew increasingly complex. Some color illustrations are shown in the Appendix to this document.

6. List and interpret objects, events, images and symbols of families' participation in famous historical, cultural, religious events. The list will lengthen with time. Students listed 3000 to 5000 symbolic objects important to their families during the course of the practicum. Some dominant symbols may be seen in the coats of arms. In the Discussion section of this chapter, the writer will indicate a few powerful, poignant objects and symbols that took on new meaning in a familial context.

7. List artifacts and families' specialized skills and creative or inventive contributions of family members. Students distinguished themselves often through skills they felt were passed down to them, but which would be anachronous for their more distant predecessors. Excellence in dirt-bike riding, cheerleading, Eagle scout attainment, student council work and other endeavors often recalled ambitions and dreams of parents and even grandparents.

8. Family trees were not enlarged by the end of the process.

Small libraries of literary documents and artifacts did emerge. One student collected the following items: a Bible with a family tree, an aunt's diary of World War II, a Scottish book of recipes, a journal entitled "Castle Island Days," a video entitled "Plays I Starred In," valentines, dolls, a will, piano notebooks, a stuffed bear, a "Sassy Strawberry" painting, letters from a brown-eyed girl, and a bunny leash.

Discussion

The nature of the practicum was to challenge students to involve themselves in critical and creative presentation of literary and cultural artifacts derived from familial sources. The writer's hope was to generate a sense of self-acceptance and pride in family/ethnic/social group membership in each student. Portfolios, performances, and especially the written and published work of students demonstrated the power of the process in quickening a positive self-awareness among students. This discussion will indicate obstacles of family trauma, and new insights of students about themselves by their coming to understand motivations and points of reference of other family members. The goal was to strengthen adolescent self-identity by generating and presenting

family literary documents. By building upon lessons already tried by other English teachers in other locales that were published in IdeasPlus, Book Ten (1992), the writer gained access to the strongest possible family feeling and points of tension through student compositions. The process meant that students found and published the beauty of their own strong voices in ways no teacher could ever forget. One student summed up the process as follows:

> Teenage years seem to be the most confusing years of our lives. Even the stress and pressure adults face is better than our self doubt and self-misunderstanding. Last year for me was a long time full of depression and self-hate. Every day I seemed to concentrate on all the things about me I didn't like. I would make a list and think about each topic so that I fell deeper into depression with each thought. My physical condition, the general way I looked, my clothes, my attitude, the way I treated my friends and family and the lonely place I had locked myself into.
>
> Dealing with this for over a year became very tiresome and scary. I tried to change the situation by changing everything but myself. I started dating someone, but even when his arms held me tight, I was alone in a world of self hate. I spent many nights crying and thinking of a solution. I began to realize that I had to change the things about myself that I didn't like. I knew it would be a very slow process, but gradually it started happening.
>
> I let go of my temper and I stopped being sarcastic and moody. I thought about the way I was going to act before I did anything. Soon I was able to act the way I wanted to be. Then I did this without having to think about it. I believe I changed everything about myself down to my handwriting.
>
> My entire personality shed its skin, and a new inner beauty emerged. I was who I wanted to be, a caring, dedicated

> lady with morals that I followed. I began to appreciate myself and realize that I was a good person. I began to like myself. When this new person emerged from within, a sense of self awareness came along with it. When I sit down to write, or just to think, I close my mind and from deep in my soul comes the knowledge that will answer any question or solve any problem I have. I am in another state of consciousness that tells me how to think about whatever is on my mind. There is my voice- deep in another part of my mind.
>
> When I finish writing, I'm usually exhausted, but full of meaning and life. When I read over what I've written, I'm amazed. I didn't realize I had this knowledge. I write about what I know in my soul.

Student loneliness and poor self treatment is often occasioned by family loss or trauma. One student who had been treating herself badly believed that her Vietnam War veteran father shunned her because he hated her. In discussion regarding family stories with her mother, the student found that her father felt guilty about a war incident. The student's age and bearing reminded her father of an episode where he believed that he had to shoot dead a young Vietnamese girl who suddenly appeared from the jungle strapped with explosives to kill the father's infantry unit.

The literary classics served as mirrors for students in approaching the barriers to resolution of the trauma. A boy wrote:

> I lost someone close to me in my short life so far. It was my father. He died of cancer in September right before my seventh birthday so I can relate to how Conrad feels about losing his brother in Ordinary People. Conrad feels guilty

> because he did not drown in the storm with his older brother. He feels mad and like a loser, so he tries to kill himself and fails, so he sees the psychiatrists. When my father died, I didn't accept or understand the concept of death. I didn't know what "dead" meant. I feel a little guilty because I only visited him one time, and that I wasn't there at his side when he died. I also felt mad and still do sometimes because I don't have any decent or clear memories of him and myself. I remember what he looked like, but that's because I have a picture of him in my bedroom, with me as a baby. I have faint memories of him bringing me home toys when he came home from work. The difference between me and Conrad is that I feel stronger because I made it through without a crisis. I'm fine today.

The task of interviewing parents for documents led to significant bondings. A student with self-worth, depression and boyfriend problems wrote:

> ...One night it was just me and my mom for dinner. My mother is an example of a striking beauty. I have never told her that and probably won't. . . out of the blue, she put a pea on her fork and flung it at me. The food fight this started was hilarious. Well, anyway, she knew I was hurting with tears starting to form in the brims of my eyes. She started asking what was wrong. I told her everything- how used I felt, how inferior to my sister, what bothered me about my family... everything. She listened patiently and told me I have become a better person. She told me that I was beautiful. This meant so much to me; it sparked my self-confidence, and made me feel good about myself again. That night she got to know me, not her kid, not some bratty jerk, but the real me and I got to know the real her, not the person I thought was against everything I stood for. I saw myself in her. It was actually scary. I know now that my sensitivity, stubborness and nurturing qualities come from her. That night I found my best friend. My mom.

Other family literary documents showed angry explosive families.

"...Someone is always screaming in my house and no one is really happy. It upsets me a lot, and sometimes when I sleep I feel the walls are screaming too. We're such an angry family with so much boiling inside just waiting to explode. Tick...tick...tick...BOOM!"

Yet another student wrote: "...Why do I feel so alone, so betrayed, and most of all so angry? WHY CAN I FEEL THE PAIN OF OTHERS BUT NOT HAVE ANYBODY CARE ENOUGH ABOUT ME TO SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS WITH ME? When I'm at a party, I just watch everyone have a good time. I feel like I'm unable to have a good time. I feel as thought I'm a gigantic ball of stress ready to explode!!"

The first angry student quoted above did not resolve the family conflict, but did get published twice, and felt that significant family members reacted with unusual warmth and enthusiasm to the publishing successes. Sharing the stress through creating and presenting literary documents to the public and to friends seems to have helped these students to work through frustrations and to bond more effectively with family and other nurturing people. The last quoted student's more recent family literary documents recorded her preparations for confirmation in her church, and her admiration at the new support of her family. A final example records the bonding of two brothers:

My depression got to the point where I didn't care any more. My life meant nothing to me, and I felt that it meant nothing to

anyone else either. I remember the day. Arguing with my brother, he told me I should just "Go die!" So as I went up the stairs, I convinced myself that I should. I went to the bathroom and got a disposable razor and brought it back to my room. As I was breaking the head off, I heard my brother yelling to his friends, "He's always saying he's going to do it and he never does. Maybe he should. He's never going to. Why should I care?" By this time, I had removed the two blades from the razor. I was now no longer out to kill myself. It was more just to prove that I would. I took the thickest blade in my right hand and put it to my skin. I kept saying to myself, "Maybe I should. No one cares anyway." I started to drag the blade across my skin until I drew blood. It was too painful to continue, so I decided to use another method. I dropped the blade and grabbed my coat and went out the door. I roamed around a parking lot in circles trying to make sense of it all. The only answer to me was death. I then walked to Main Street and waited to be hit by a car. I saw the headlights coming, and at first wanted to move, but stopped myself. As the car got closer, I just closed my eyes and waited to die. A few seconds before the car would've hit, my brother pulled me out of the way. I didn't even think. I just saw another car coming and ran to the street to get hit by that one. My brother grabbed my shirt, ripping the top button off. I was so mad because I liked that shirt. He pulled me away just in time to see the car go by where I would have been hit. We then screamed at each other. I think it led to tears. Then I stayed out and thought for a long time. For a long while after that I continued to think about it. I then realized it was a stupid thing to do. I now know that was not the right way to deal with whatever I was going through at the time, although I can't promise I won't do it again. I told my girlfriend that as long as we're together I wouldn't. And I won't, but if we separate, it could put me right back where I was before. I hope we never do. As long as we're together, I'll be fine.

From the beginning, the practicum process implied growth in literacy through community building. The first task was to learn to

reflect by sharing traditional rhetorical concepts and methodologies not in some sterile context, but as active agents and members of groups and families. One alienated student joined the class in talking of basketball through his journal essay. Later he re-joined the basketball squad he had forsaken, and shared confidences regarding family relationships in his journals. Meanwhile the students defended themselves in print as cheerleaders, atheists, Jews, Christians, poets and dirt-bike champions with eloquence and pride. At the same time, they shared nine varieties of irony, the mystery of metaphor, oxymoronic expression, the elements of fine writing style, critical definitions of plot, theme, characterization, rhythm, texture, image, tragedy, comedy, farce, symbolic uses of language, nonverbal communication techniques, interviewing skills, simulations, creative dramatics, presentation of lyrics, memorization of beautiful passages, fundamentals of aesthetics, logic, and stream of consciousness techniques. The students became computer-literate writers and helpful, brainstorming critics, actors, singers, debaters, reporters, artists, sociologists, and celebrants of their familial identities. They formed a community of concerned, enthusiastic seers who spotlighted themselves and their

families by employing the powerful language of family stories. They began and ended with a measure of space presented as familial, as their own, as home base. After the adventures of interviewing, writing, presenting, creating symbolic coats of arms, and claiming a larger context of ethnic and sociological bonding, the students/heroes returned home like Tom Sawyer or Jim Hawkins to reflect on the meaning of the story of their larger lives. As a group their growth is reflected in their respect for the larger context and for the variety of communities out of which they came.

Recommendations

The enthusiastic performances, the writing and publication of the works of more than 20 of the 55 students, the lists of relatives and images found significant, the graphics and the coats of arms indicate a clear measure of the power of the bonding approach in strengthening adolescent identity through creation and sharing of family literary documents. The spin-offs and the evidence of quality work demonstrate the value of this curriculum's holistic component. The goal of freeing the student to grow was enhanced by making the student the expert, the researcher, the adventurer, the performer, the writer and the hero of a story of

autobiographical journeying through adolescence. The journey was safely timed in the family's past, so that its fruit would be a harvest of deeper meaning and potentially richer future bondings. The hunger of the relatives for copies of student-produced family trees, the pride and delight in replicating or creating coats of arms, and the multi-level bonding interactions bespoke a generative curriculum that the community could appreciate and honor.

The teacher's role is to go far beyond the goal of delivering knowledge to children. Armed with a sense of tradition as a source of future identity sustenance, and with a sense of mission to connect students to the power of their ethnic and sociological group nurturing resources, teachers can encourage students to search for preexisting narrative threads of their biological, sociological, psychological and ethnic forbearers. This practicum employed the traditional Renaissance humanist approach of using the elements of good writing style, the study of graceful texts and powerful literary classics, and presentation of debate/displays/performances as the core of the curriculum. Such time-honored experiences helped to produce culturally bonded writers such as Shakespeare, Donne, Herrick, Milton, Shaw, Wilde, Chesterton etc. Just as these famed

writers wrote out of a tradition, the literary family documents of this practicum restored memories of family lore and history. Such memories and positive larger self images clearly fostered identity strengthening in most of the students quoted in the discussion above. The study of contemporary classics showed how adolescents who had lost their sense of identity regained the joy of shared sensibility through family and group bonding.

The recommendations here are not that teachers try to replicate this practicum, but that due attention be given to the process by which the results were measured and achieved. Examples include letting students explore their own learning styles through English practicum experiences, journals, and focus on pride in ethnic gifts of beauty, culture, talent, persistence and courage. Additional steps involved enhancing place awareness, community building for shared literacy projects, multicultural uses of names, rituals, rite of passage experiences, cultivation of memory imaging, and helping students feel safe through positive projection and sharing of ethnic and social group memberships. These and other approaches easily lend themselves to pre-writing, pre-interviewing, and pre-performance treatments as indicated in the lessons selected from

the NCTE publications and used in this practicum.

Dissemination

This report will be made available upon request to any interested professional, parent or citizen. Copies will be placed in local university libraries, and English education departments. Additional copies may be obtained on written request from the author.

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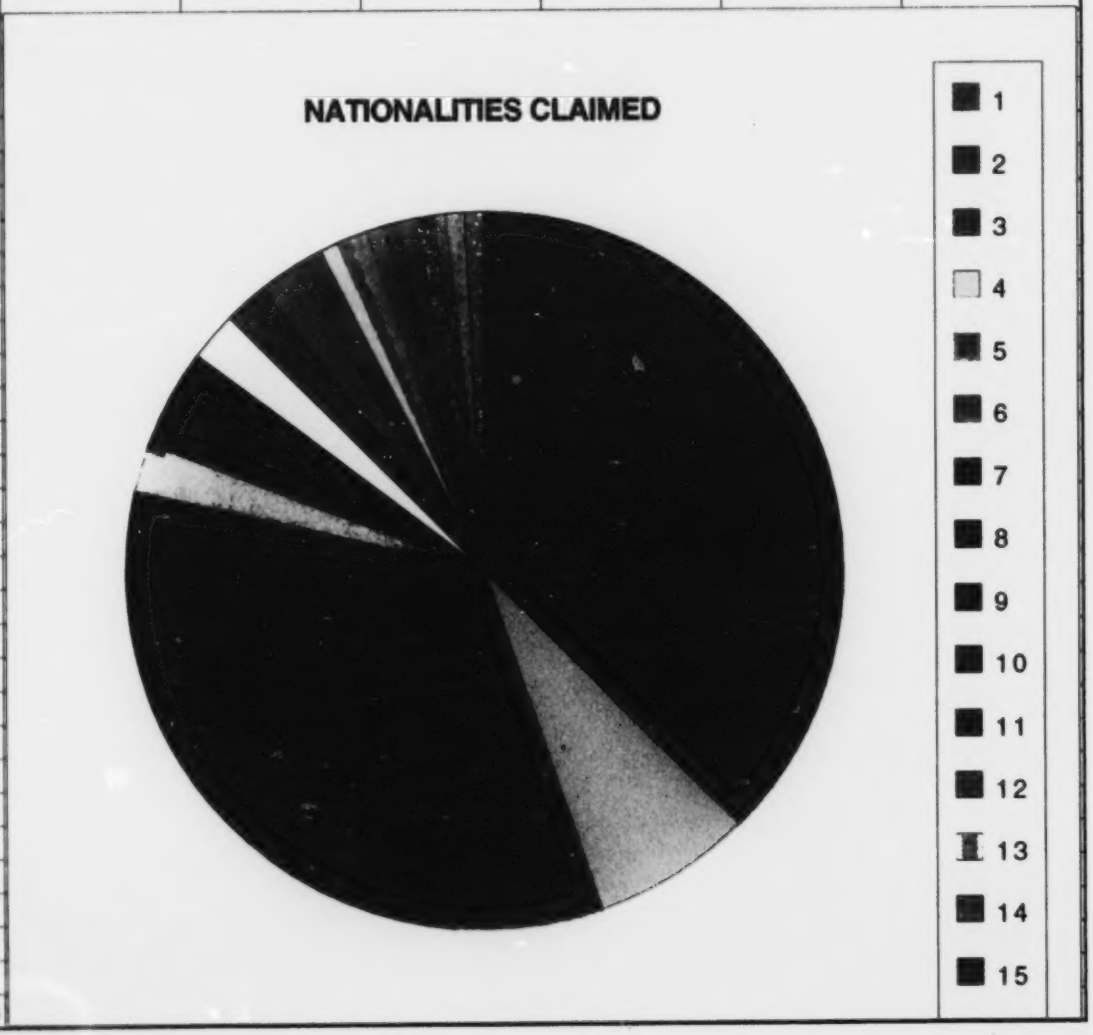
APPENDIX A

ETHNICITIES CLAIMED

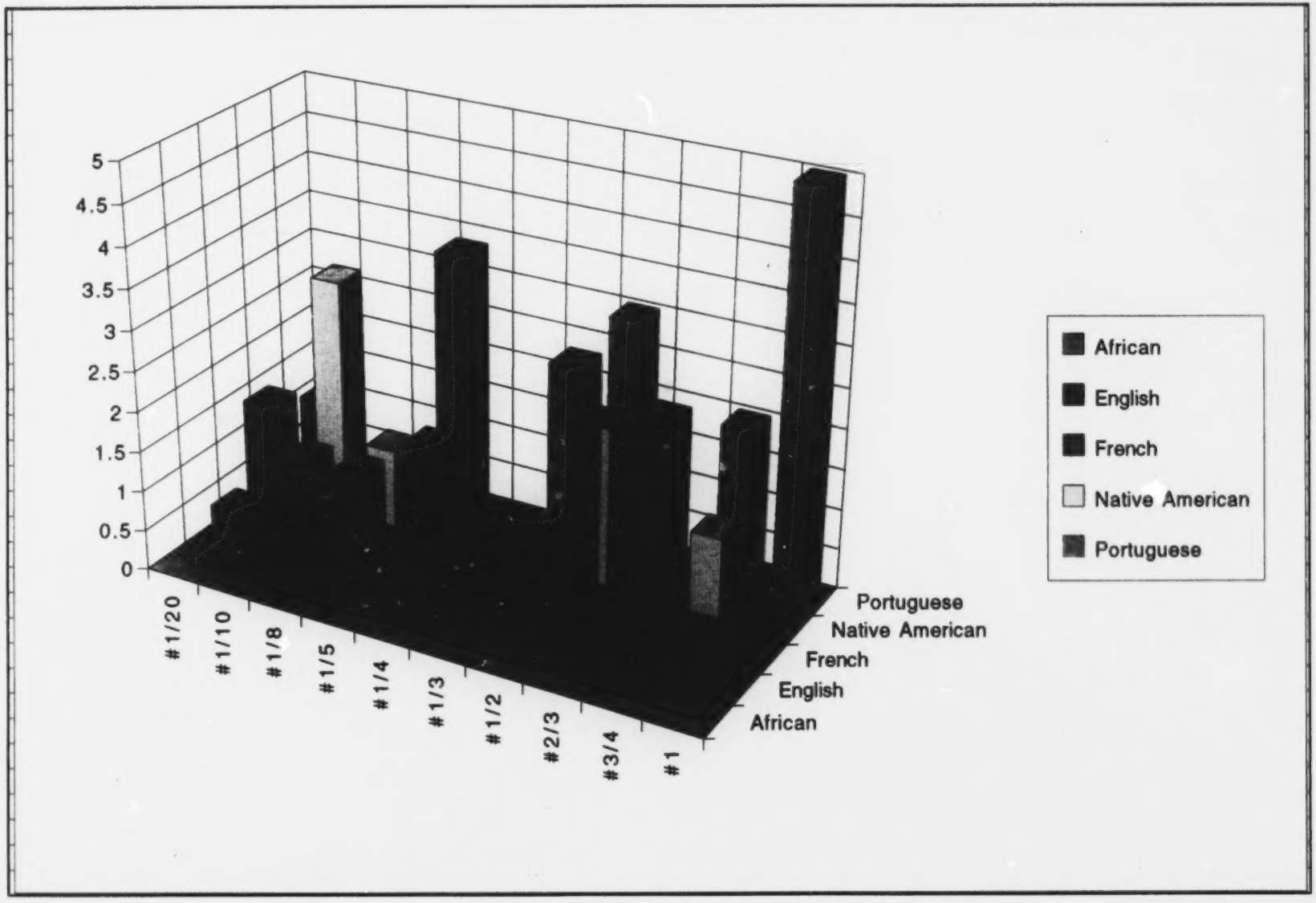
Ethnic Identification	Number
1. Irish	26
2. Italian	14
3. Portuguese	11
4. French	10
5. English	9
6. German	7
7. Native American	7
8. Catholic	6
9. Canadian	5
10. Scottish	5
11. Russian	4
12. African	3
13. Cape Verdean	3
14. Lithuanian	3
15. Norwegian	3
16. Polish	3
17. Swedish	3
18. Dutch	2
19. Jewish	2
20. Careeb	1
21. Chinese	1
22. Danish	1
23. Haitian	1
24. Hawaiian	1
25. Jamaican	1
26. Spanish	1
27. Thai	1
28. Welsh	1
29. West Indian	1
Total	**136**



APPENDIX B

DEGREE OF NATIONALITIES CLAIMED

DEGREE OF NATIONALITY CLAIMED



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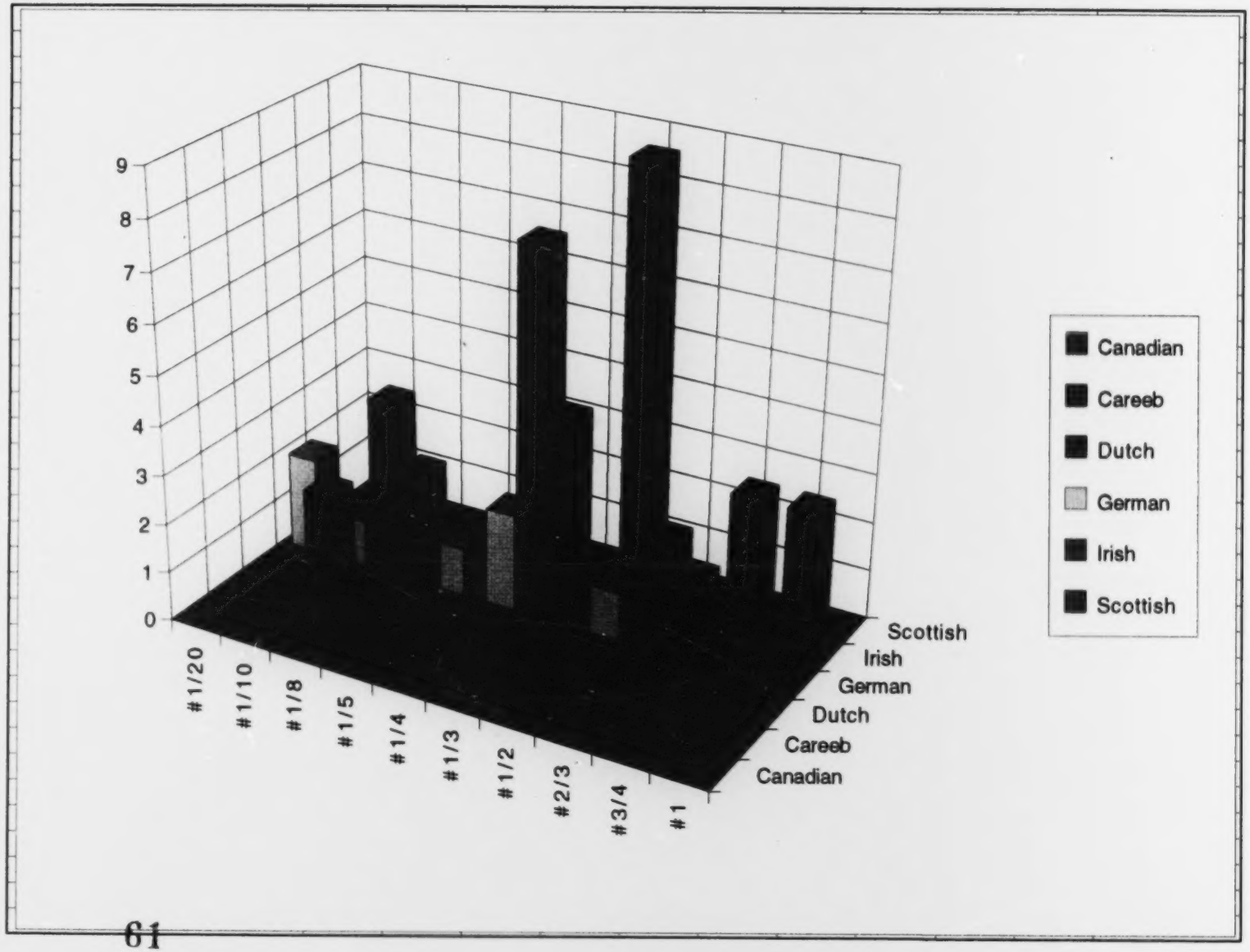

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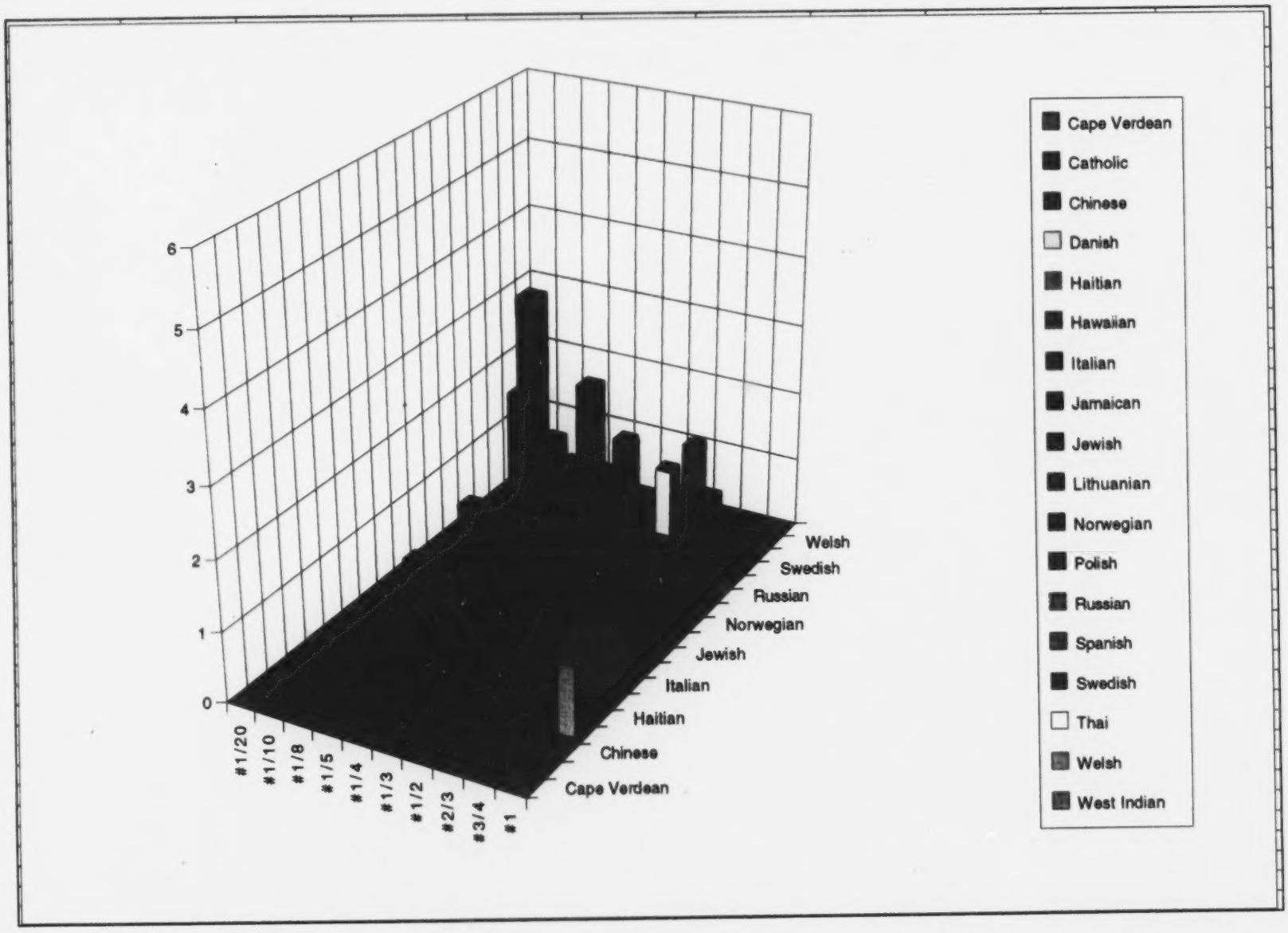

APPENDIX C

STUDENT DESIGNED COATS OF ARMS

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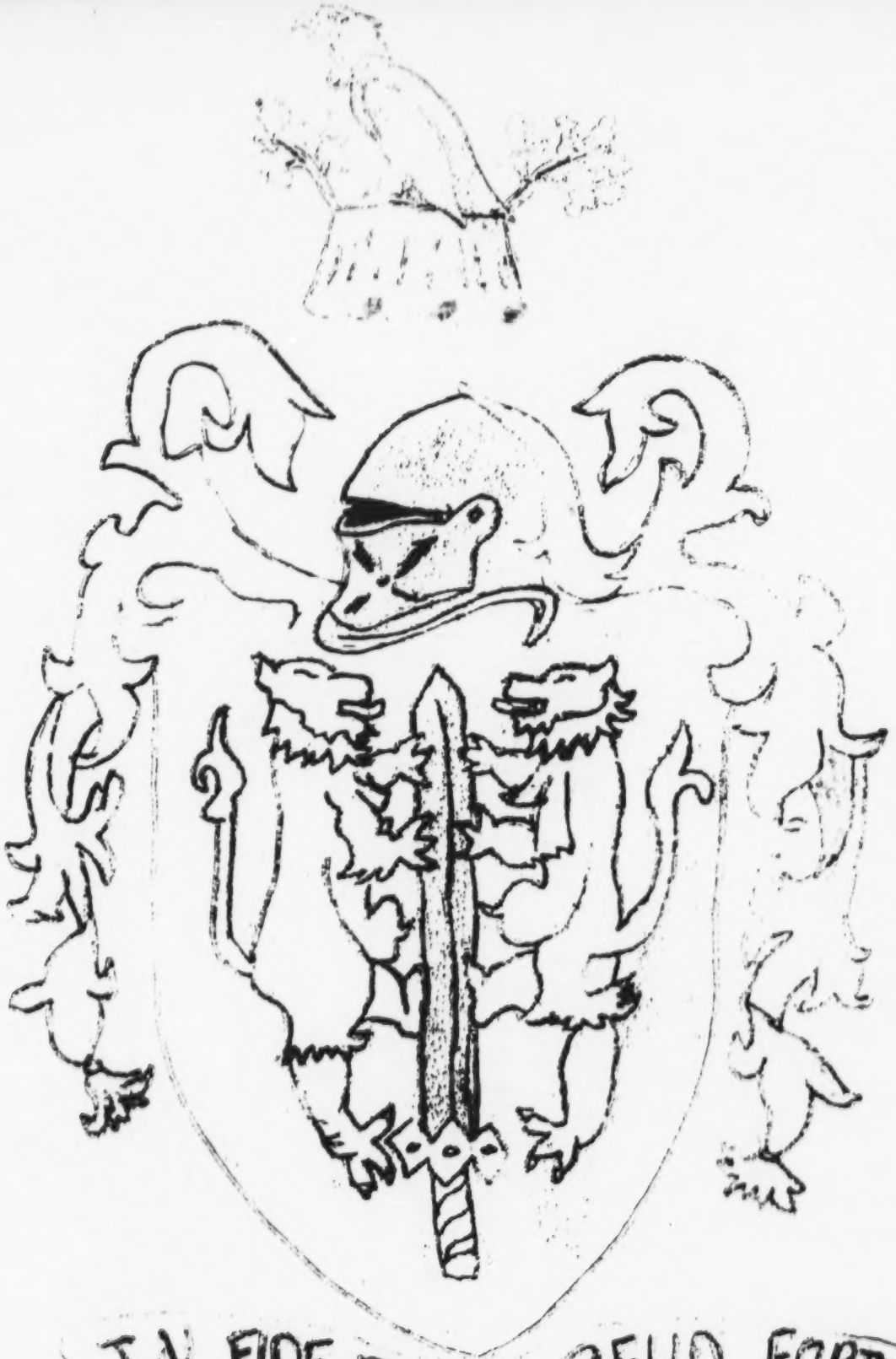

Carroll

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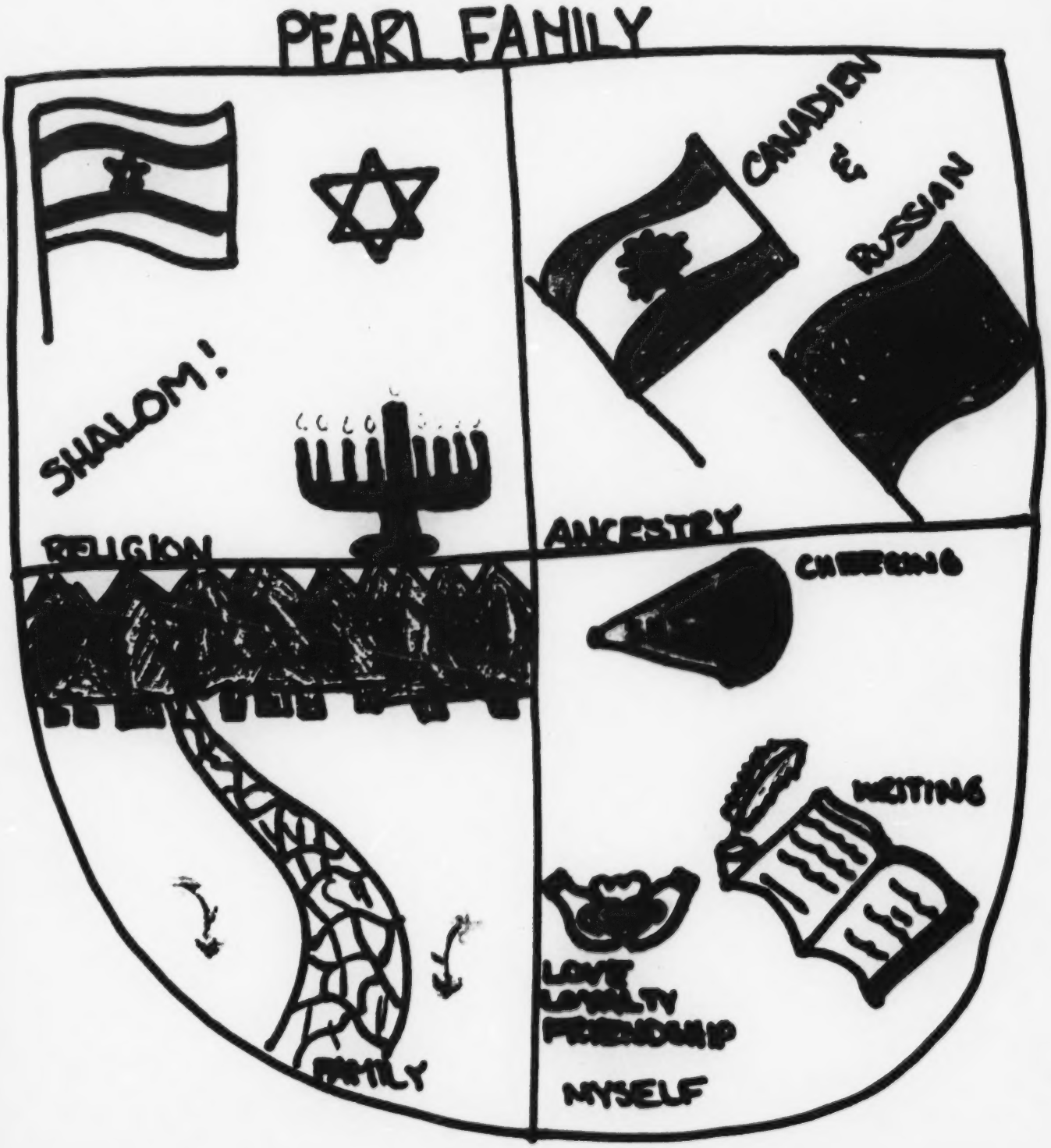

EVERY PATH LEADS BACK TO YOUR FAMILY

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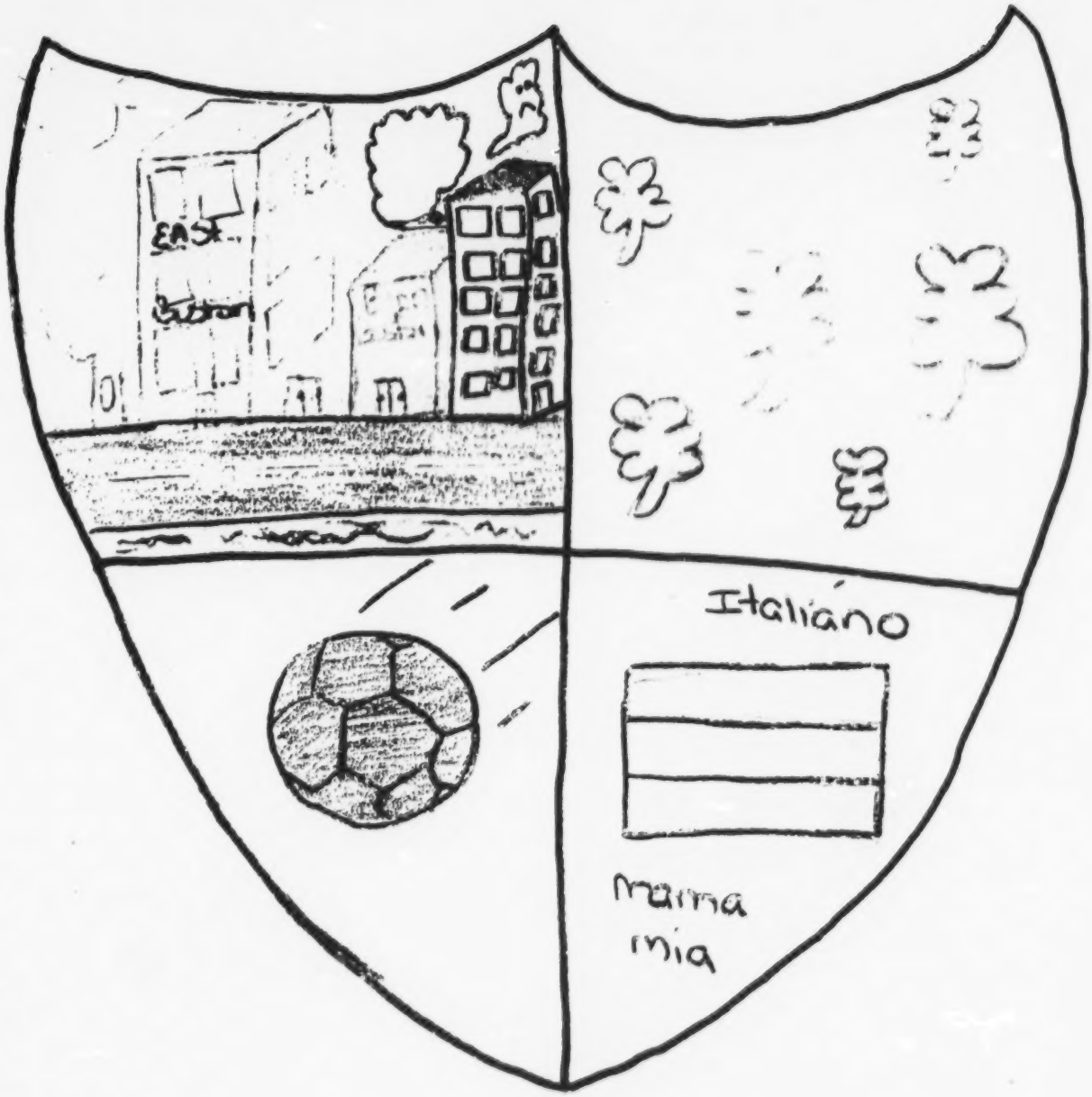
Kim Dimarco
Coat of arms



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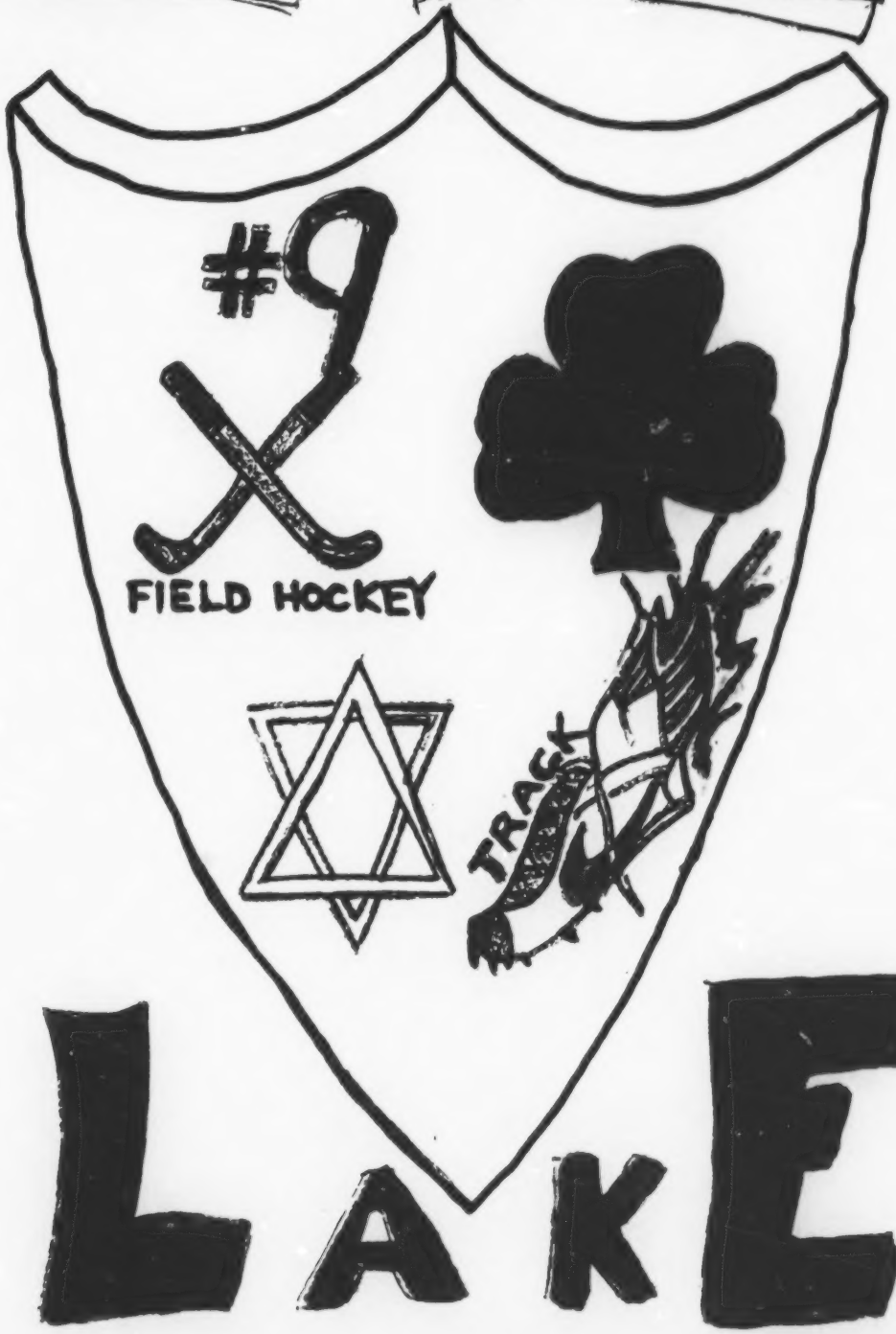

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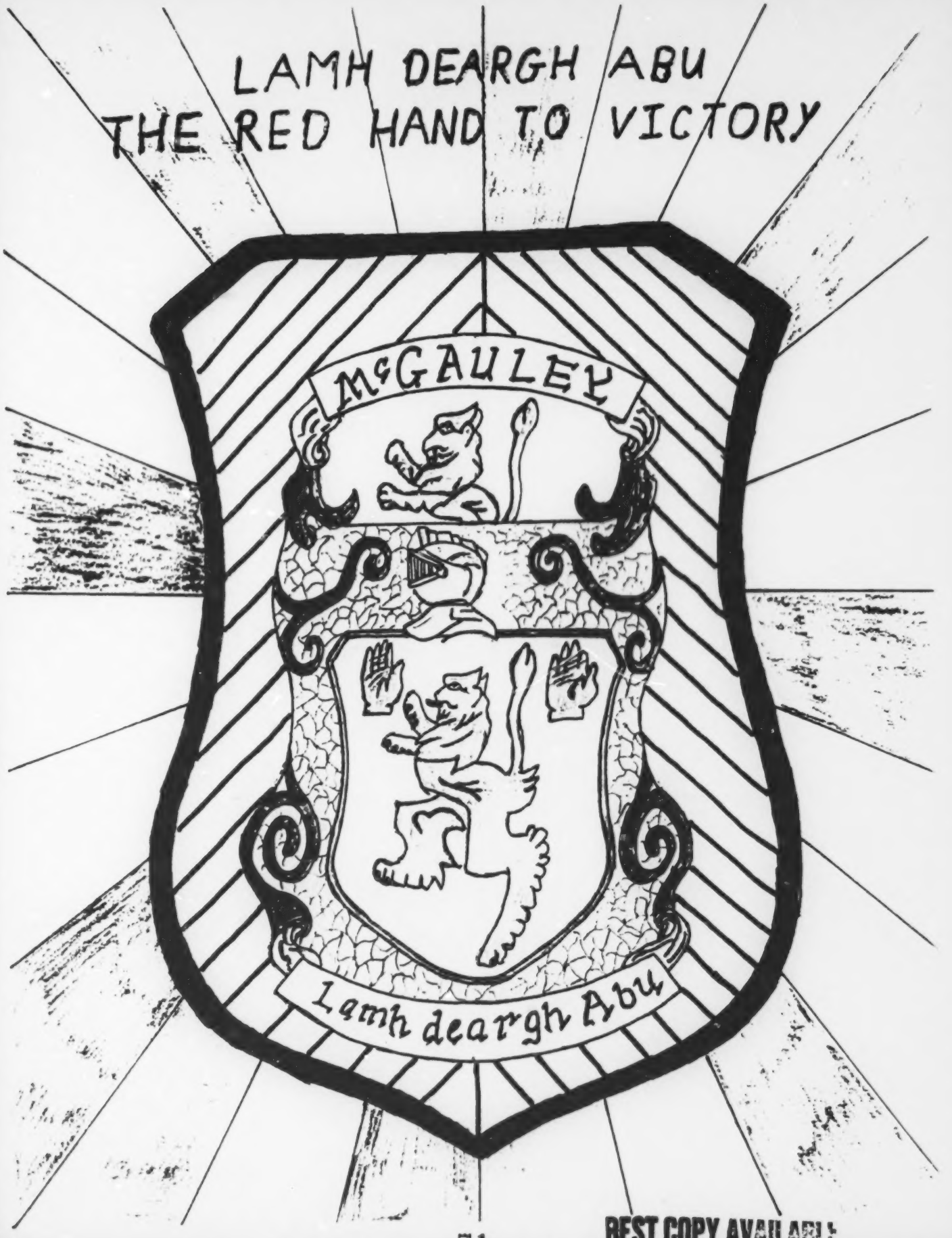

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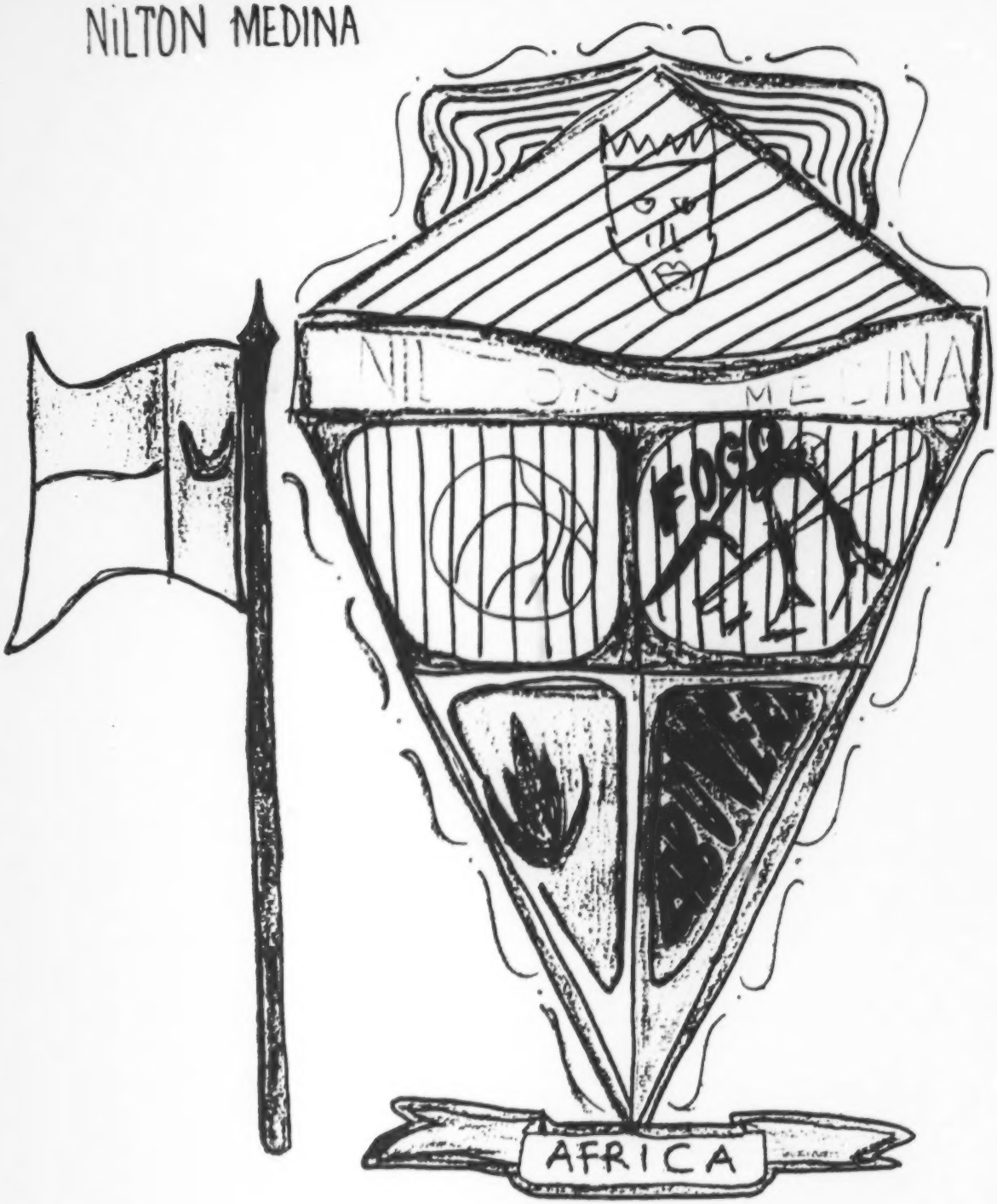

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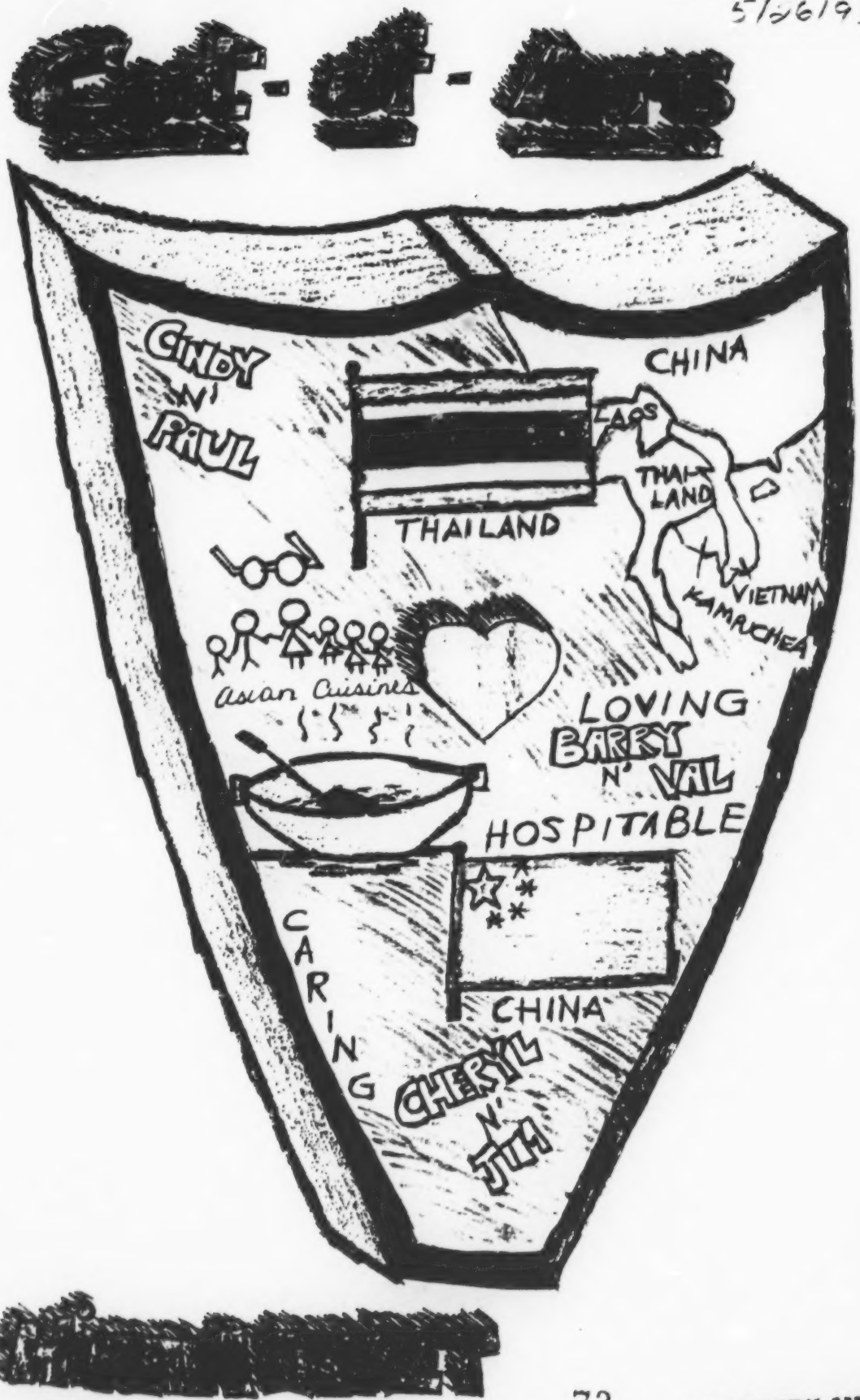
Cheryl Yamaoka
5/26/93



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